

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3000

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 10809

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, PINT, PINS, BR

SUBJECT: CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS - EXPULSION OF FATHER JENTEL

REF: (A) BRASILIA 3804 (PARA B) OF MAY 1974, (B) BRASILIA 3626 OF
MAY 1974

FOLLOWING WAS RECEIVED FROM CONGEN RIO DE JANEIRO:

QUOTE

1. SUMMARY. EXPULSION OF FRENCH PRIEST ON DEC 16 HAS CONVINCED NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BRAZILIAN BISHOPS (CNBB) THAT HARD-LINE IS IN THE ASCENDENCY IN TERMS OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS AND THAT INCIDENT FITS INTO GENERALLY HOSTILE ATTITUDE BY HARD-LINE TOWARD LIBERAL MEMBERS OF THE BRAZILIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY AND CNBB MANIFESTED IN RECENT MONTHS BY DEFAMATORY LETTER CAMPAIGNS. BY ARRESTING AND FORMALLY EXPELLING PRIEST, GEISEL GOVERNMENT HAS REVIVED CAUSE CELEBRE IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS WHICH IT INHERITED FROM MEDICI AND WHICH IT HAD ADROITLY MANAGED TO PUT TO REST IN 1974. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING VICE SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BRAZILIAN BISHOPS (CNBB), FRENCH PRIEST FRANCOIS JACQUES JENTEL DEPARTED BRAZIL MORNING DEC 16, 1975 PURSUANT EXPULSION ORDER SIGNED BY PRESIDENT GEISEL DEC 15. ACCORDING TO JUSTICE MIN
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STATEMENT ISSUED DEC 15, EXPULSION ORDER HAD BEEN PREPARED IN

1974 BUT WAS NOT SIGNED BY PRESIDENT BECAUSE, AT THE REQUEST OF CHURCH AUTHORITIES, JENTEL WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY OF HIS OWN VOLITION ON THE UNDERSTANDING HE WOULD NOT RETURN TO BRAZIL.

3. CNBB ISSUED ITS OWN STATEMENT EVENING DEC 15 EXPLAINING: JUDICIAL STATE OF PLAY REGARDING CHARGES AGAINST JENTEL; HIS DEPARTURE FROM BRAZIL; HIS RECENT RETURN, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS ARREST. CNBB STATEMENT ALSO CATIGORICALLY DENIED THAT IT KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT THE DEAL (MENTIONED IN THE JUSTICE MIN STATEMENT) BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES TO THE EFFECT THAT JENTEL LEFT BRAZIL VOLUNTARILY IN 1974 PROVIDED HE DID NOT RETURN. IN ITS STATEMENT CNBB ACKNOWLEDGES THAT SUBSEQUENT TO JENTEL'S DEPARTURE IN 1974, FEDERAL POLICE (DPF) PRINTED NOTICES WHICH IT DISTRIBUTED TO ITS OFFICES IN VARIOUS STATES STATING CHURCH HAD AGREED JENTEL COULD NOT REENTER BRAZIL. CNBB ARGUES IT NEVER TOOK OFFICIAL NOTE OF THE DPF NOTICE.

4. CNBB VICE SEC GEN, FATHER VIRGILIO UCHOA, SAID JENTEL'S RETURN TO BRAZIL WAS HIS OWN IDEA. CNBB NEITHER ENCOURAGED NOR DISCOURAGED HIM. AFTER SPENDING SEVERAL MONTHS WITH HIS MOTHER IN FRANCE, JENTEL VISITED A BROTHER WHO LIVES IN US. DEPARTING MIAMI, HE ENTERED COUNTRY AT BRASILIA AS A TOURIST ON DEC 1 (HIS PERMANENT VISA IS ALSO STILL IN ORDER). AFTER A BRIEF VISIT TO GOIAS, HE WENT TO FORTALEZA TO VISIT DOM ALOISIO LORSCHIEDER, ARCHBISHOP OF THAT CITY AND PRESIDENT OF THE CNBB. THE MORNING OF DEC 12, NOT FAR FROM THE ARCHBISHOP'S DOOR, JENTEL WAS GRABBED BY FOUR MEN IN PLAIN CLOTHES WHO IMMOBILIZED HIM BY BLOWS TO THE HEAD AND GROIN AND DROVE OFF WITH HIM IN AN UNMARKED CAR. KNOWING OF THE DPF CIRCULAR, DOM ALOISIO CONCLUDED HE HAD BEEN SEIZED BY FEDERAL POLICE. A FEW MINUTES AFTER THE SEIZURE, TWO DPF AGENTS KNOCKED AT THE ARCHBISHOP'S DOOR AND ASKED FOR JENTEL. WHEN TOLD THAT POLICE ALREADY HAD HIM, THE TWO DPF MEN EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND LEFT. LATER THAT MORNING, ARCHBISHOP LOCATED JENTEL AT DPF HQ. CNBB BELIEVES VISIT BY TWO DPF AGENTS INTENDED TO GIVE VENEER OF LEGALITY TO EARLIER ILLEGAL SEIZURE OF JENTEL. FLOWN TO RIO DE JANEIRO THE EVENING OF DEC 12, JENTEL SPENT THE WEEKEND UNDER DETENTION AT A NAVAL INSTALLATON. THE CNBB LEARNED THAT PRESIDENT GEISEL HAD SIGNED THE EXPULSION ORDER THROUGH A TELEPHONE CALL THE AFTERNOON OF DEC 15 FROM THE CONFIDENTIAL

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JUSTICE MIN FALCAO TO RIO DE JANEIRO'S CARDINAL-ARCHBISHOP DOM EUGENIO SALLES.

5. FATHER JENTEL WAS A PARISH PRIEST AT SANTA TERESINHA NEAR THE URUGUAIA RIVER IN MATO GROSSO WHO HELPED POSSEIROS TO DEFEND THEIR SMALL LAND HOLDINGS AND ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS AGAINST LARGE LANDFOWNERS AND LAND OWNING FIRMS. HE ALSO EXPOSED A FARM IN THE AREA THAT HAD SLAVE LABOR. SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION BY THE

FED GOVT DISCLOSED TO ITS EMBARRASSMENT THAT THE SLAVE FARM WAS PARTIALLY FINANCED WITH FEDERAL MONIES. IN 1972 THE LOCAL POPULACE OF SANTA TERESINHA FOUGHT A GUN BATTLE WITH THE AUTHORITIES. FATHER JENTEL WAS ACCUSED OF HAVING INCITED THEM TO THIS AND, IN MAY 1973, WAS SENTENCED TO TEN YEARS IN MILITARY PRISON ON THAT CHARGE. IN 1974 THE SUPREME MILITARY TRIBUNAL QUASHED THE SENTENCE ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE CHARGES WERE NOT VIOLATIONS OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAW AND THEREFORE THEIR PROPER VENUE WAS THE CIVILIAN COURTS. AN EXPULSION ORDER WAS PREPARED FOR PRESIDENT GEISEL'S SIGNATURE BUT WAS NOT SIGNED. REPORTEDLY, AT THE REQUEST OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR AND THE PAPAL NUNCIO, JENTEL WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE BRAZIL VOLUNTARILY. THE CASE AGAINST HIM IN THE CIVILIAN COURTS HAS NEVER BEEN BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

6. IN CONTRAST TO THE FIRM TONE OF THE CNBB'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT JENTEL, MEDIUM LEVEL OFFICIALS OF THE CNBB INTERNALLY FEEL OUTRAGED, AGGRIEVED AND DOUBLE-CROSSED. THE CNBB VICE SEC GEN STATED THAT IN HIS VIEW, JENTEL'S ARREST DEMONSTRATES THAT IN TERMS OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS, THE HARD-LINE IS IN THE ASCENDENCY. "WE ARE CONVINCED PRESIDENT GEISEL HAS GOOD INTENTIONS TOWARD THE CHURCH. HOWEVER, SO LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO DEAL WITH THE CHURCH THROUGH JUSTICE MINISTER FALCAO, WE WILL KNOW THAT PRESIDENT GEISEL HAS NOT MANAGED TO ASSERT HIMSELF." "AT LEAST NOW WE KNOW HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO BE AND THAT IS A NET GAIN." "THE CHURCH IS WILLING TO ESTABLISH DIALOG WITH ANYONE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH. THIS IS WHAT IT GETS FOR ITS PAINS." CNBB VICE SEC GEN BELIEVES THIS INCIDENT IS ONE MORE MANIFESTATION OF HOSTILITY ON THE PART OF HARD-LINE ELEMENTS TOWARD POLITICALLY LIBERAL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH HIERARCHY AND SPECIFICALLY AGAINST THE CNBB. IN RECENT MONTHS HE SAID THERE HAVE BEEN A SERIES OF DEFAMATORY LETTERS DISTRIBUTED ABOUT CERTAIN CHURCH LEADERS SUCH AS CNBB SEC GEN DOM IVO LORSCHETER AND SAO PAULO'S CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP DOM PAULO EVARISTO ARNS. HE SAID THAT AFTER THE DEATH

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OF JOURNALIST HERZOG IN SAO PAULO THE BISHOPS OF SAO PAULO ISSUED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING ARRESTS AND VIOLENCE (MENTIONED IN THE PRESS ON OCT 30). HE SAID THE SECURITY SERVICES HAD APPARENTLY PREPARED A "BLACK" LETTER IN REPLY TO THE BISHOPS' STATEMENT WHICH WAS MAILED TO CATHOLICS IN NOVEMBER. ENTITLED "DON'T KID YOURSELF, BROTHER" (NAO TE ENGANES, IRMAO), IT IS A TAKEOFF ON THE BISHOPS' STATEMENT AND SUGGESTS THAT MANY IN THE CHURCH ARE LEFTISTS. HE EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO CITE A DECISION TAKEN ON DEC 15 BY THE SUPREME COURT (STF) CONFIRMING THE SIX MONTH SENTENCE OF A PRIEST FOUND GUILTY OF WAGING "ADVERSE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE" IN 1969 AS A FURTHER EXAMPLE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE HARD-LINE. UNQUOTE

COMMENT: IN EMBASSY VIEW, EXPULSION OF FATHER JENTEL WAS INEVITABLE ONCE HE RE-ENTERED BRAZIL, AS THE GOVERNMENT QUITE

CLEARLY BELIEVED THAT IT HAD A DEAL AND THAT THE OTHER PARTY
RENEGED. WE THEREFORE CONSIDER IT NO INDICATION OF CURRENT
HARD-LINE STRENGTH, THOUGH WE CAN UNDERSTAND HOW CNBB MIGHT SEE
IT AS SUCH IN LIGHT OF CURRENT LEVEL OF SUSPICIONS BETWEEN
PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIP. IT IS POSSIBLE
AND APPEARS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT NOT ALL THOSE INTERESTED
IN THE CASE WERE INFORMED OF THE DEAL, AND INDEED JENTEL'S
ACTION IN RETURNING SEEMS INCREDIBLY IMPRUDENT AND
EVEN FOOLHARDY IF DONE IN CONSCIOUS DEFIANCE OF A DEAL. WHATEVER
THE FACTS (AND SOME BREAK-DOWN IN COMMUNICATION QUITE OBVIOUSLY
OCCURRED), THE REACTION AT THE MIDDLE LEVELS OF THE CNBB IS
IMPORTANT IN ITSELF AND IPSO FACTO SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT
CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS. AS FOR THE GOVERNMENT SIDE, THE
VIGOR AND RAPIDITY OF ITS HANDLING OF THE MATTER SUGGESTS
THAT IT TOO, AT LEAST AT SOME LEVELS, FEELS IT WAS PROVOKED.
END COMMENT.
CRIMMINS

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